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Health Services

**PROFESSIONAL BOARD AND NATIONAL
CERTIFICATION EXAMINATIONS**

COMPLIANCE WITH THIS PUBLICATION IS MANDATORY

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This instruction implements AFPD 41-1, *Medical Programs and Resources*, and provides requirements and procedures for applying to take professional board or national certification examinations. See [Attachment 1](#) for a glossary of references, abbreviations, and acronyms.

SUMMARY OF REVISIONS

This is the initial publication of AFI 41-104. It includes revised lists of approved certifying agencies in [Attachment 2](#) through 7.

Section A—Overview

1. Program Purpose:

1.1. Purpose. This instruction provides guidance and criteria for determining whether a member meets the prerequisites for certification. It tells how to apply for professional board or national certification examinations in the Medical Service and who may approve members to take these exams. It also describes the criteria for reimbursement of fees and expenses, and identifies documentation requirements.

1.1.1. Send requests for policy clarification or waiver guidance to HQ USAF/SGHP, 170 Luke Avenue Suite 400, Bolling AFB DC 20332-5113.

Section B—Application Procedures for Officers

2. Professional Board Examinations and Certification for Officers:

2.1. How To Apply for a Professional Board Examination or Certification:

2.1.1. If you consider yourself eligible for a professional board or certification examination, write directly to the examining agency.

2.1.2. Once the agency confirms your eligibility, in order to receive reimbursement, you must submit to your commander a letter (with supporting correspondence or documentation) requesting permission and, as needed, to be placed on temporary duty (TDY) or leave status to take the examination.

2.1.3. For Air Reserve Component (ARC) officers, your commander's written reply must include a statement identifying how the Air Force will benefit if you take the examination.

2.2. Who May Approve Your Request. Medical treatment facility (MTF) commanders may approve funded TDY, permissive TDY, or leave status to take examinations by any organization listed in [Attachment 2](#), [Attachment 3](#), [Attachment 4](#), [Attachment 5](#), and [Attachment 6](#) after confirming:

- Your eligibility to take the examination.
- Your completion of all necessary requirements.

2.2.1. If you serve at Headquarters US Air Force (HQ USAF) or a major command (MAJCOM), request approval from the surgeon at your organizational level.

2.3. How Officers Get Approval for a Part I Examination:

2.3.1. Officers serving in Continental United States (CONUS) may receive funded TDY for Part I of a professional specialty board examination, if local funds are available.

2.3.2. Officers serving overseas and wishing to take Part I of a professional specialty board examination may not return to the CONUS to take the board examination unless it is not offered in their overseas station area.

2.3.3. Before commanders approve a return to CONUS to take the examination, they must consider the economic feasibility of taking the examination in an overseas area closer than CONUS or of requesting that the senior Air Force physician in the geographical area coordinate with the responsible agency to administer the examination in the overseas area.

2.4. How Officers Get Approval for a Part II Examination:

2.4.1. Officers serving in CONUS may receive funded TDY for Part II of a professional specialty board examination, if local funds are available.

2.4.2. Officers serving overseas and wishing to take Part II of a professional specialty board examination or a single or combined examination may return to CONUS for examination only when they:

- Are currently on a 2-year or longer overseas tour.
- Have at least 6 months left to serve in their overseas assignment after completing the examination. *Note: Only overseas MAJCOMs may waive these two requirements.*
- Have duties that don't demand their presence.
- Can get travel and examination-related expenses locally from appropriated funds.

Section C—Application Procedures for Enlisted Personnel

3. National Certification Examinations And Certifying Agencies For Enlisted Personnel:

3.1. How To Apply for a National Certification:

3.1.1. Enlisted personnel who consider themselves eligible to take a national certification examination must

- Write directly to the examining agency concerned to determine eligibility.
- Request the examination site closest to their duty station.

NOTE:

In most instances, the Staff Development Officer or your Noncommissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC) is the point of contact to request these examinations at your location.

3.2. Who Approves the Request To Take Examinations:

3.2.1. Once the examining agency confirms eligibility, submit a written request to your commander requesting permission to take the examination given by any organization listed in [Attachment 7](#).

3.2.2. The commander must give a written reply, which may authorize:

- Funded TDY.
- Permissive TDY.
- Leave status to take the examination.

3.2.3. If you serve at HQ USAF, a MAJCOM, or a subcommand, the appropriate surgeon may approve your request.

Section D—Cost

4. Reimbursable Fees and Expenses:

4.1. What Is Not Reimbursable. AFI 44-119, *Quality Assurance and Risk Management in the Air Force*, prohibits using appropriated funds to pay fees relating to a professional license. You, the individual, are financially responsible for all costs that you incur getting or maintaining a license.

4.1.1. Commanders may approve permissive TDY for Medical Service personnel taking licensure examinations.

4.1.2. State licensure, the Federation of State Licensing Boards, National Board of Medical Examiners, Part III, and the Licensure of the Medical Council of Canada examinations do not qualify for Government funding or reimbursement.

4.2. Special Situations:

4.2.1. Failed Board Examinations. The Air Force will pay for a professional board examination or national certification examination only once. If you fail the examination, you become personally responsible for payment of all future reexamination and travel fees.

4.2.2. Recertification. For those disciplines that require recertification, the Air Force will reimburse you once per mandatory (currency) period.

4.2.3. Long Course Programs. Travel costs and expenses related to certification, recertification, or national licensing agencies not listed in [Attachment 2](#) through 6 but required as part of a Medical Service officer's long course program (AFCAT 36-2223, *US Air Force Formal Schools*) may be reimbursable provided that AFI 41-119 does not specifically prohibit them.

4.2.4. Multiple Board Certification. Officers who are board eligible in more than one specialty may earn board certification in each of the specialties subject to the specific restrictions of this instruction.

4.2.5. Travel Restrictions. Actual funded travel depends upon the availability of local travel funds. Applicants receive TDY for the least amount of time required to take the examination, plus travel time. Military air travel must be used if available.

4.2.6. Extra Time. You must get separate approval while on TDY for board or certification examinations to attend professional meetings or to handle delays en route.

4.2.7. Membership Fees. Annual or recurring membership fees are the responsibility of individual Medical Service members.

4.3. Who Qualifies for Reimbursement:

4.3.1. Active Duty Officers Qualify for Reimbursement if They:

- Are graduates of a basic professional or advanced professional Air Force-sponsored program or are Regular or CRS Medical Service officer.
- Have at least 2 years of active duty remaining after they complete the professional board examination.

4.3.2. ARC Medical Service Officers Qualify for Reimbursement if They:

- Are not serving a training obligation.
- Have completed their initial active duty service commitment.
- Are now serving on an extended active duty (EAD) tour.
- Will have at least 2 years of active service remaining after they complete the examination.

4.3.3. Officers may qualify for reimbursement of application, examination, certification, or recertification fees or for advancement in a specialty within their respective corps, plus the necessary costs of examinations by the professional organizations listed in [Attachment 2](#) through 6.

4.3.4. Certain dental board examinations require the candidate to furnish a patient and a dental assistant. Officers may receive funding for these personnel, if it is available.

4.3.5. All Medical Service officers working in quality assurance may qualify for reimbursement for the Quality Assurance Certification Examination of the Quality Assurance Certification Board. All Medical Service officers working in hyperbaric medicine may qualify for reimbursement for certification in hyperbaric technology by the National Board of Diving and Hyperbaric Medical Technology.

4.3.6. Enlisted medical personnel may receive reimbursement of fees for application, examination, and certification relating to examinations by the organizations shown in [Attachment 7](#). The

Air Force will normally reimburse someone only once for costs associated with a national certification examination. When recertification is mandatory, commanders may approve reimbursement for both the initial certification and subsequent required recertifications. Enlisted applicants must have a minimum of 2 years of remaining duty after completing the examination to qualify for government funding, unless Air Force or DoD directives require certification.

4.3.7. Commanders may approve other requests falling outside of the guidance in this instruction only under permissive TDY or leave status conditions. As with all other similar requests, the commander's decision will depend upon Air Force needs.

4.4. How To File for Reimbursement:

4.4.1. Funds For Repayment. If the member is assigned to:

- A medical facility--Use funds available for the operation and maintenance of the facility where you are assigned.
- A MAJCOM or Subcommand Headquarters--Use funds available for direct expense for administration of that headquarters.
- HQ USAF--Use funds available for the direct expense of HQ USAF.

4.4.2. Your authorized expenses may be paid through either of the following methods:

- The base contracting office may pay your examination fees by contract when this method is acceptable to the examining agency. Under this method, the base pays your fees upon completion of the examination. If you fail to take the examination as scheduled and have not received an official excuse, the examining agency may require you to pay the examination fees anyway.
- You may pay the fees for application, examination, advancement, certification, recertification, or registration directly from your personal funds. To get reimbursement, you file a travel voucher through the finance center; and attach the receipts for fee payments, TDY travel orders, and evidence of the commander's prior approval to take the examination.

Section E—Post Examination Responsibilities

5. Responsibilities:

5.1. Medical Service Officers. You must inform your commander, through the unit, when you have successfully completed a specialty certification examination. Provide a copy of the specialty certification notification letter or certificate to the unit personnel and administrative activity. The certification qualifies you for award of the "M" prefix to the AFSC directly related to the field in which you obtained certification. [Attachment 2](#) through 6 list the acceptable professional organizations for which you may receive award of the "M" prefix. BSC also recognizes award of the "M" prefix for state licensure in professional engineering, audiology, and speech pathology.

5.2. Enlisted Personnel. You must provide a copy of the certification documentation you received from the professional organization to your unit personnel and administrative services to update training or personnel records as appropriate.

5.3. Your Organization Responsibilities After the Examination:

5.3.1. Officers. Your organization fills out AF Form 2096, **Classification/On-The-Job Training Action**, requesting the award of the "M" prefix for officers receiving approved certifications. Your unit then provides the completed AF Form 2096 to the Military Personnel Flight (MPF) for final approval, award of the "M" prefix, and input into the Personnel Data System.

5.3.2. Your Unit Credentials Monitor:

- Verifies that this instruction recognizes your specialty board or affiliation and that the "M" prefix refers to the correct medical specialty as identified in AFI 36-2105, *Officer Classification*.
- Verifies MC, DC, and applicable BSC and NC officers' specialty certification with the applicable specialty board, which your provider file documents.
- Conducts a semiannual credentials review and verification of board certificates with the corresponding award of the appropriate "M" AFSC prefix.

5.3.3. Medical and Dental Corps Officers. Your organization sends a copy of the certification to HQ AFMPC/DPMMUF2, 550 C Street West Suite 27, Randolph AFB TX 78150-4729 for inclusion in your officer's promotion folder and to the special pays section to start board certification payment.

ALEXANDER M. SLOAN, Lt General, USAF, MC
Surgeon General

Attachment 1

GLOSSARY OF REFERENCES, ABBREVIATIONS, AND ACRONYMS

References

AFPD 41-1, *Medical Programs and Resources*

AFI 36-2105, *Officer Classification*

AFI 44-119, *Quality Assurance and Risk Management in the Air Force*

AFCAT 36-2223, *US Air Force Formal Schools*

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFB—Air Force Base

AFCAT—Air Force Catalog

AFI—Air Force Instruction

AFSC—Air Force Specialty Code

ARC—Air Reserve Components

BSC—Biomedical Sciences Corps

CONUS—Continental United States

CRS—Conditional Reserve Status

DC—Dental Corps

DoD—Department of Defense

EAD—Extended Active Duty

HQ AFMPC—Headquarters Air Force Military Personnel Center

HQ USAF—Headquarters US Air Force

MAJCOM—Major Command

MC—Medical Corps

MPF—Military Personnel Flight

MTF—Medical Treatment Facility

NCOIC—Noncommissioned Officer in Charge

NC—Nurse Corps

TDY—Temporary Duty

Attachment 2

CERTIFICATION AGENCIES FOR MEDICAL CORPS

A2.1. American medical specialty boards and special competency examinations that the Council on Medical Education of the American Medical Association and the American Board of Medical Specialties recognize:

- A2.1.1. American Board of Allergy and Immunology.
- A2.1.2. American Board of Anesthesiology.
- A2.1.3. American Board of Colon and Rectal Surgery.
- A2.1.4. American Board of Dermatology.
- A2.1.5. American Board of Emergency Medicine.
- A2.1.6. American Board of Family Practice.
- A2.1.7. American Board of Internal Medicine.
- A2.1.8. American Board of Medical Genetics.
- A2.1.9. American Board of Neurological Surgery.
- A2.1.10. American Board of Nuclear Medicine.
- A2.1.11. American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology.
- A2.1.12. American Board of Ophthalmology.
- A2.1.13. American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery.
- A2.1.14. American Board of Otolaryngology.
- A2.1.15. American Board of Pathology.
- A2.1.16. American Board of Pediatrics.
- A2.1.17. American Board of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation.
- A2.1.18. American Board of Plastic Surgery.
- A2.1.19. American Board of Preventive Medicine.
- A2.1.20. American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology.
- A2.1.21. American Board of Radiology.
- A2.1.22. American Board of Surgery.
- A2.1.23. American Board of Thoracic Surgery.
- A2.1.24. American Board of Urology.

A2.2. American osteopathic specialty boards and special competency examinations that the Bureau of Professional Education and Advisory Board of Osteopathic Specialties of the American Osteopathic Association recognize:

- A2.2.1. American Osteopathic Board of Anesthesiology.
- A2.2.2. American Osteopathic Board of Dermatology.
- A2.2.3. American Osteopathic Board of Emergency Medicine.
- A2.2.4. American Osteopathic Board of General Practice.
- A2.2.5. American Osteopathic Board of Internal Medicine.
- A2.2.6. American Osteopathic Board of Neurology and Psychiatry.
- A2.2.7. American Osteopathic Board of Nuclear Medicine.
- A2.2.8. American Osteopathic Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology.
- A2.2.9. American Osteopathic Board of Ophthalmology and Otorhinolaryngology.
- A2.2.10. American Osteopathic Board of Orthopedic Surgery.
- A2.2.11. American Board of Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine.
- A2.2.12. American Osteopathic Board of Pathology.
- A2.2.13. American Osteopathic Board of Pediatrics.
- A2.2.14. American Osteopathic Board of Proctology.
- A2.2.15. American Osteopathic Board of Public Health and Preventive Medicine.
- A2.2.16. American Osteopathic Board of Radiology.
- A2.2.17. American Osteopathic Board of Rehabilitation Medicine.
- A2.2.18. American Osteopathic Board of Surgery.

A2.3. The American Board of Medical Management of the American College of Physician Executives.

Attachment 3

CERTIFICATION AGENCIES FOR DENTAL CORPS

A3.1. American dental specialty boards that the Council on Dental Education of the American Dental Association recognizes.

A3.2. Federal Services Board of General Dentistry.

A3.3. Certification Equivalency Boards that the Director of Dental Services recognizes.

Attachment 4

CERTIFICATION AGENCIES FOR NURSE CORPS

- A4.1.** American Association of Critical-Care Nurses Certification Corporation.
- A4.2.** American Board of Post-Anesthesia Nursing Certification.
- A4.3.** American College of Nurse-Midwives.
- A4.4.** American Nurses Association: American Nurses Credentialing Center.
- A4.5.** Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing.
- A4.6.** Certification Board of Infection Control.
- A4.7.** Certified Flight Nurse Association.
- A4.8.** Council on Certification of Nurse Anesthetists.
- A4.9.** Enterostomal Therapy Nursing Certification Board.
- A4.10.** Healthcare Quality Certification Board.
- A4.11.** National Board of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners and Associates.
- A4.12.** National Certification Board for Diabetes Educators.
- A4.13.** National Certification Board of Perioperative Nursing.
- A4.14.** National Certification Corporation for Obstetric, Gynecologic and Neonatal Nursing Specialties.
- A4.15.** National League for Nursing.
- A4.16.** National Reciprocity Consortium/Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Incorporated.
- A4.17.** Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation.
- A4.18.** Orthopedic Nurses Certification Board.

Attachment 5

CERTIFICATION AGENCIES FOR BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES CORPS

- A5.1.** Academy of Certified Social Workers.
- A5.2.** American Academy of Environmental Engineers.
- A5.3.** American Academy of Optometry Fellowship Status.
- A5.4.** American Board of Bioanalysis.
- A5.5.** American Board of Clinical Chemistry.
- A5.6.** American Board of Forensic Toxicology, Inc.
- A5.7.** American Board of Health Physics.
- A5.8.** American Board of Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics.
- A5.9.** American Board of Industrial Hygiene.
- A5.10.** American Board of Medical Laboratory Immunology.
- A5.11.** American Board of Medical Microbiology.
- A5.12.** American Board of Occupational Health Nurses, Inc.
- A5.13.** American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties for Certification in Cardiopulmonary, Clinical Electrophysiology, Neurology, Sports, Pediatric, and Orthopaedic.
- A5.14.** American Board of Podiatric Orthopedics.
- A5.15.** American Board of Podiatric Surgery.
- A5.16.** American Board of Professional Psychology.
- A5.17.** American Board of Psychological Hypnosis.
- A5.18.** American Board of Radiology.
- A5.19.** American Board of Toxicology.
- A5.20.** American Board of Veterinary Practitioners.
- A5.21.** American Board of Veterinary Toxicology.

- A5.22.** American College of Clinical Pharmacy, Nuclear Pharmacy.
- A5.23.** American College of Clinical Pharmacy, Nutritional Pharmacy.
- A5.24.** American College of Clinical Pharmacy, Pharmico Therapy.
- A5.25.** American College of Clinical Pharmacy, Psycho Therapy.
- A5.26.** American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine.
- A5.27.** American College of Veterinary Microbiologists.
- A5.28.** American College of Veterinary Pathologists.
- A5.29.** American College of Veterinary Preventive Medicine.
- A5.30.** American College of Veterinary Surgery.
- A5.31.** American Dietetic Association Fellowship Status.
- A5.32.** American Occupational Therapy Association.
- A5.33.** American Registry of Professional Entomologists.
- A5.34.** American Speech and Hearing Association.
- A5.35.** Association of Occupational Health Nurses.
- A5.36.** Board of Certified Safety Professionals.
- A5.37.** Certification Board, Aerospace Physiologists Society, Aerospace Medical Association.
- A5.38.** Certification in Nuclear Pharmacy Practice.
- A5.39.** National Certification Agency for Medical Laboratory Personnel.
- A5.40.** National Commission on the Certification of Physician Assistants and Physician Assistant Specialty Boards.
- A5.41.** National Council of Architectural Registration Boards.
- A5.42.** National Registry of Clinical Chemistry.
- A5.43.** National Registry of Microbiologists of the American Academy of Microbiology.
- A5.44.** Registry of American Society of Clinical Pathologists.

Attachment 6

CERTIFICATION AGENCIES FOR MEDICAL SERVICE CORPS

A6.1. American College of Healthcare Executives, Diplomate or Fellow.

A6.2. Healthcare Financial Management Association, Fellow.

A6.3. International Certification Commission for Clinical Engineering and Biomedical Technology, Certified Clinical Engineer.

A6.4. National (or State) Council of Architectural Registration Boards, Registered Architect.

A6.5. Society of Logistics Engineers, Certified Professional Logistician.

Attachment 7

CERTIFICATION AGENCIES FOR MEDICAL ENLISTED AFSCS

Table A7.1. Certification Agencies for Medical Enlisted AFSCs.

AFSC	Agency	Title of Examination
4A0X1	None	
4A1X1	International Material Management Society	Certified Professional in Material Management (Member)
4A2X1	International Certification Commission for Clinical Engineering and Biomedical Technology	Certifying Examination (Certified Biomedical Equipment Technician)
4B0X1	American Board of Industrial Hygiene/Board of Certified Safety Certifying Examination of Occupational Professionals--Joint Committee	Certifying Examination of Occupational Health and Safety Technologist
	Institute for Environmental Career Advancement	Certification for Hazard Materials Technician
	National Registry of Radiation Protection Technologist	Certification Examination
4C0X1	None	
4D0X1	Certifying Board for Dietary Managers	Certification Examination
4E0X1	National Sanitation Foundation/Educational Foundation of the National Restaurant Association	Food Service Sanitation Certifying Examination
4F0X1	National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians	Certifying Examination
4H0X1	National Board for Respiratory Care	Pulmonary Function Technologist Certification and Registry Examinations
	Cardiovascular Credentialing International	Certification Examination (Cardiology Technician) Registry Examination (Invasive and Non invasive Cardiology)
	American Registry of Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	Echocardiographic Registry Examination
4J0X1	American Occupational Therapy Certification Board	Certification Examination for Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants
4M0X1	None	
4N0X1	National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians	Certifying Examination

AFSC	Agency	Title of Examination
4N0X1B	American Board of Electroencephalographic (EEG) Technologists	Certifying Examination
4N1X1	Association of Surgical Technologists, Inc.	National Certifying Examination for Surgical Technologists
4N1X1C	National Association of Orthopaedic Technologists	Certifying Examination
4P0X1	American Society of Hospital	Appropriate State Regulatory Agency
	Pharmacy (or equivalent)	Certifying Examination
4R0X1	American Registry of Radiologic Technologists:	Examination in Radiologic Technology Examination in Nuclear Medicine Examination in Radiation Therapy Examination in Angiography
	American Registry of Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	Diagnostic Medical Sonographic Registry for Neurosonography Abdomen Sonography OB/GYN Sonography
	State Radiographic Associations (or equivalent)	Certification, Licensure, or Registry Examination for Radiographic Technicians
4R1X2	None	
4S0X1	State Board (National Certifying Agency is the American Physical Therapy Association)	Physical Therapy Assistant Licensure Examination
4T0X1/2/3	American Medical Technologist	Medical Laboratory Technician Certification Examination Medical Technologist Certification Examination
	International Society for Clinical Laboratory Technology	Credentialing Examination for Medical Technology and Laboratory Technician
	National Certification Agency for Medical Laboratory Personnel	Registry Examination for: Clinical Laboratory Scientist Clinical Laboratory Specialist, Hematology Clinical Laboratory Technician
		Clinical Laboratory Phlebotomist
		Clinical Laboratory Specialist, Cytogenetics

AFSC	Agency	Title of Examination
	American Society of Clinical Pathologists	Registry Examination for Medical Technologist in: Blood Chemistry Chemistry Hematology Immunology Microbiology Cytotechnologist Histopathology Technician Medical Laboratory Technician Specialist in Blood Banking Specialist in Chemistry Specialist in Hematology Specialist in Immunology Specialist in Microbiology Specialist in Cytotechnology Phlebotomy Technician
4U0X1	American Board for Certification in Orthotics and Prosthetics, Inc.	Certified Orthotics Examination Orthotics Bench Technician Examination
4V0X1	American Optometric Association	Paraoptometric Examination for Optometric Assistant (Member) Examination for Optometric Technician
	State Optometric Associations	Certification, Licensure, or Registry Examination for Optometric Assistants or Technicians
4V0X1A	The Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology	Certifying Examination, Ophthalmic Assistant in Ophthalmology
4Y0X1	Dental Assisting National Board Certified Oral Maxillofacial Surgery	Certified Dental Assisting Examination Assisting Examination Certified Dental Practice Management Assisting Examination Certified Orthodontic Assisting Examination Certified Dental Radiation Health and Certified Dental Radiation Health and Safety Examination Dental Infection Control Examination

AFSC	Agency	Title of Examination
4Y1X1	National Board for Certification in Dental Laboratory Technology	Written Comprehensive Examination Removal Partial Denture Examination Complete Dentures Examination Orthodontics Examination Fixed Partial Denture Examination Dental Ceramics Examination